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CIRC Alternatives Task Force Phase 1 Report **DRAFT 12/01/11**

Contents

- 1) Overview of the *CIRC Alternatives Task Force* Process
- 2) *CIRC Task Force* Membership
- 3) Project Prioritization and Scoring Process
- 4) *Task Force* Phase 1 Accomplishments – Short Term Implementation Package for Consideration in the FY13 Capital Program
- 5) Schedule for *CIRC Alternatives Task Force* Phase 2
- 6) Addenda: Links to *Task Force* Background Materials

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1) Overview of the CIRC Alternatives Task Force Process

Since the Governor's May 20th announcement that the Chittenden County Circumferential Highway - as originally conceived - would not be built, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) has coordinated a process to identify projects and planning activities to implement the purpose and need that the Circ highway was originally intended to address.

The CCRPC, in collaboration with VTrans, convened the ***CIRC Alternatives Task Force***, consisting of twenty-three representatives of the Towns of Colchester, Essex, Williston, the Village of Essex Junction, state agencies, CCTA, the bicycle and pedestrian community, environmental groups, and the business community. The Task Force's charge was to identify a list of immediate, mid-term, and long-term recommendations for projects and planning activities to address mobility, congestion, transportation demand, safety, livability, and economic development in the region.

The Task Force met six times between July and December 2011. The group reviewed projects which were ready or nearly ready to go into design/right-of-way, construction phases, agreed upon a prioritization system (designed to complement existing CCRPC-MPO and VTrans systems), and arrived at consensus on a suite of six projects which the Task Force has presented to the Governor and VTrans for consideration of inclusion in the State's FY12 Budget Adjustment and FY 13 Capital Program.

The package of projects represents an \$11.5 million infrastructure and program investments in Chittenden County. The projects are detailed in the attached item 4) *Task Force Phase 1 Accomplishments*, and include (in no particular order):

- Exit 16 Improvements, Colchester (Project CircAlt IMP-03)
- VT2A/VT289 Interchange Improvements, Essex (Project CircAlt IMP-06)
- Crescent Connector Road, Essex Junction (Project CircAlt IMP-11)
- VT2A/James Brown Drive, Williston (Project CircAlt IMP-19)
- Regional Transportation Demand/System Management (Transit, TDM/TSM)

The Task Force will hold a public meeting to discuss the process and project recommendations on Wednesday, December 14, from 7:00-9:00PM, at the Albany College of Pharmacy, 261 Mountain View Drive in Colchester. This will be an opportunity for the Task Force to present the projects to the public, media, and Legislators. Each community will make a brief presentation and take questions.

The next phase of work for the ***CIRC Alternatives Task Force*** will address the prioritization and commencement of planning projects to inform future prioritization of mid-term implementation projects. The planning projects will be prioritized in December; planning projects are expected to commence by mid January 2012. The Task Force anticipates receiving the planning studies' recommendations by the fall of 2012 in order to prioritize the next round of implementation projects for the FY14 Transportation Capital Program.

2) CIRC Task Force Membership

<p><u>Williston</u> Terry Macaig, Selectboard Chair Rick McGuire, Town Manager Chris Roy, Primary RPC Representative</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Ken Belliveau, Bruce Hoar</p>	<p><u>Essex</u> Linda Myers, Selectboard Chair Pat Scheidel, Town Manager Jeff Carr, Primary RPC Representative</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Dennis Lutz, Trevor Lashua</p>
<p><u>Essex Junction</u> George Tyler, Village President Dave Crawford, Village Manager John Lajza, Primary RPC Representative</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Robin Pierce</p>	<p><u>Colchester</u> Richard Paquette, Selectboard Chair Al Voegelé, Town Manager Marc Landry, Primary RPC Representative</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Bryan Osborne</p>
<p><u>Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)</u> Brian Searles, Secretary</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Amy Bell, Ken Robie</p>	<p><u>Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)</u></p> <p><i>Technical Advisor:</i> Chris Jolly</p>
<p><u>Other Primary Regional Transportation Partners</u> Meredith Birkett, CCTA Acting General Manager</p> <p>Chapin Spencer, Local Motion Executive Director</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Jason Van Driesche, Local Motion</p>	<p><u>Business Community</u> Tim Baechle, IBM</p> <p>Jeff Nick, Business Community Liaison</p> <p>Dawn Francis/Curt Carter, Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce/ Greater Burlington Industrial Corp.</p>
<p><u>Environmental Community</u> Paul Bruhn, Preservation Trust of Vermont</p> <p>Brian Shupe, Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC)</p> <p>Chris Kilian, Conservation Law Foundation (CLF)</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Sandy Levine, Melissa Hoffer, CLF</p>	<p><u>State Agencies</u> Secretary Deb Markowitz, VT Agency of Natural Resources</p> <p>Commissioner Noelle MacKay, VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development</p> <p><i>Staff:</i> Mary Borg, VT ANR</p>

3) Project Prioritization and Scoring Process for Phase 1

The CCRPC-MPO and VTrans have historically prioritized transportation projects. Prioritization has numerous benefits to the State of Vermont. It advances projects consistent with long-range goals and objectives; ensures consistency in the programming of transportation projects; provides accountability and transparency; and allows for efficient use of limited transportation dollars.

The Circ Study Area was defined as areas the Circumferential Highway, as originally conceived, was intended to address, and areas that are impacted as a result of not constructing the Circumferential Highway.

CCRPC staff was charged with establishing a project prioritization and scoring process to rank the short term implementation projects for consideration by the Task Force. Staff used an established methodology that reflects planning goals articulated by the CCRPC member communities and VTrans; projects should support six planning factors:

- Economic Vitality
- Safety and Security
- Accessibility, Mobility, and Connectivity
- Environment, Energy, and Quality of Life
- Preservation of Existing System
- Efficient System Management

These factors meshed well with the original 1986 purpose and need of the Chittenden County Circumferential Highway. More detail regarding Designated Growth Centers, Downtowns, Village Centers, and New Town Centers was added to the methodology. Information for scoring projects was derived from existing studies and data collected/processed by CCRPC, VTrans, consultants, or the municipalities. A readiness factor was added with short-term implementation projects defined as those projects that could be implemented within one to two years.

On November 9, 2011, the *CIRC Alternatives Task Force* achieved consensus on a list of six projects to forward to the Governor, VTrans, and the Legislature for consideration in the State's FY 13 Capital Program.

4) Task Force Phase 1 Accomplishments: Short Term Implementation Package for Consideration in the FY13 Capital Program

The *CIRC Alternatives Task Force*, arrived at consensus on a suite of six projects that has been presented to the Governor and VTrans with the hope the package will be included in the State's FY 13 Capital Program. The package of projects represents an \$11.5 million infrastructure investment in Chittenden County.

Task Force Phase 1 Accomplishments: Short Term Implementation Package for Consideration in the FY13 Capital Program (in no particular order):

- Exit 16 Improvements, Colchester (Project CircAlt IMP-03)
- VT2A/VT289 Interchange Improvements, Essex (Project CircAlt IMP-06)
- Crescent Connector Road, Essex Junction (Project CircAlt IMP-11)
- VT2A/James Brown Drive, Williston (Project CircAlt IMP-19)
- Regional Transportation Demand/System Management (Transit, TDM/TSM)

VT 2A/James Brown Drive, Williston

- **Project Description** – Traffic signal at VT 2A/James Brown Drive with crosswalks and pedestrian phasing, 2-way left turn lane between River Cove Road and Eastview Drive, sidewalk on the east side of VT 2A, road connection from River Cove Road to James Brown Drive via Shirley Circle.
- **Expected Benefits** – The proposed improvements at VT 2A/James Brown Drive will improve the functioning of this heavily congested area between Taft Corners Williston and the Five Corners in Essex Junction. It will help manage and reduce turn conflicts along the VT 2A corridor, and allow motorists entering and exiting VT 2A to more safely move through traffic.
- **Estimated Project Cost** – \$1,500,000 (2009 Scoping Study)
- **Weblink to Study** - http://www.ccmpto.us/library/scoping/james_brown_drive/

Interstate 89 Exit 16 Improvements, Colchester

- **Project Description** - Improvements to the US 2/US 7 corridor between the I-89 Exit 16 interchange area and Rathe Road in Colchester to include: a Double Crossover Diamond (DCD) interchange design and additional turn lanes at Mountain View, Hercules and Rathe Road intersections. Under the DCD alternative, traffic on US 2/US 7 (northbound and southbound) crosses to the left side of the roadway for the short segment between the signalized ramp intersections, and then returns to the right side of the roadway once it passes the ramps.
- **Expected Benefits** – The US 2/US 7 improvements will substantially increase capacity and decrease congestion (improved Level of Service and volume /capacity ratio; decrease vehicle queuing) at the five intersections in the study area—especially the closely spaced intersections between the Interstate Ramps and Mountain View Drive. Improvements will also address safety issues—currently there is one high crash roadway segment and one high crash intersection (southbound ramps) in the study area.
- **Estimated Project Cost** - \$5,000,000 (2011 Scoping Study)
- **Weblink to Study** - <http://www.ccmpto.org/I89/Exit16/>

VT 2A/VT 289 Interchange Improvements, Essex

Project Description - Interchange improvements at the VT 2A/VT 289 interchange to include new controllers, video detection equipment so signals can automatically respond to directional changes in traffic demand, integration of both signals (if deemed necessary), additional lane on Susie Wilson Bypass and change from cable signals and supports to mast arms (new signals).

- ▶ **Expected Benefits** - The VT 2A/VT 289 intersection was not intended to be the permanent terminus of the Circ Highway. In its current configuration traffic routinely backs up in the peak periods. The intersection currently has 20 year-old controllers with no automatic traffic controls (loops or video detectors). Upgrades to the current signal hardware will improve traffic flow through this intersection and will improve safety.
- ▶ **Estimated Project Cost** - \$780,000 (2011 Staff Estimate)
- ▶ **Weblink to Study** - <http://www.ccmpto.us/library/VT15/index.php?rept=3>

Crescent Connector Road, Essex Junction

- ▶ **Project Description** – Construction of a new local road connecting VT 2A (Park Street) and VT 117 (Maple Street) in the Village of Essex Junction. Project includes sidewalks, bike lanes and street trees.
- ▶ **Expected Benefits** – The new road will open up 6 1/2 acres of underutilized designated Village Center sites to economic development while increasing traffic efficiency and creating the potential for a multimodal transportation system. In addition to the sites directly improved by the creation of this new (complete streets) road, adjacent sites will also garner benefits from the ability of drivers to get to and from their destinations in a less congested environment that creates less greenhouse gases.
- ▶ **Estimated Project Cost** – \$3,000,000 (2011 Scoping Study)
- ▶ **Weblink to Study** - http://www.ccmpto.us/library/scoping/ejct_crescent_connector/

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)/Transportation Systems Management (TSM), Regional

- ▶ **Project Description** – Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) programs offer strategies to reduce travel demand, specifically that of single-occupancy private vehicles, and to redistribute this demand in space or in time to improve the efficiency of our transportation system. The proposed suite of TDM/TSM measures will directly address vehicle miles traveled, energy use, air quality and other public benefits including increased access of low-income persons to good jobs, inexpensive reduction of roadway and parking congestion, and cost-effective incentives for timely and convenient travel.

Funding for TDM/TSM programs in the Circ project area would complement and enhance county-wide TDM efforts funded through the FY12 Unified Planning Work Program and a recently awarded FHWA Transportation, Community and Systems Preservation (TCSP) Grant. This TCSP-funded program brings together numerous regional transportation partners to establish a TDM pilot program and directly change transportation behavior within the county. The project is a comprehensive and collaborative effort to achieve regional transportation goals outlined in the CCMPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan, as well as to address national policy objectives including the need to conserve energy, reduce reliance on energy imports, lessen congestion, and clean our Nation's air.

The following are complementary TDM/TSM projects that would target the Circ project towns as part of the overall countywide TDM pilot program:

VT15, VT2, and VT2A Transit Shelters – Construction of 10 solar shelters along VT15 with bicycle racks in Colchester and Essex and 6 solar shelters with bicycle racks in Williston (VT 2 and VT2A). Transit shelters are an important passenger amenity which increase the attractiveness and convenience of transit, which helps build ridership. Transit shelters provide a seated waiting area and protection from the elements, and lighted shelters offer a greater sense of security for those traveling at night. Shelters also serve as a type of marketing tool, making people aware that transit serves a particular area, and by including schedule information at shelters, individuals can easily access specific route information. Estimated Cost: \$512,000

Signal Improvements in the Circ Study Area (10 Signals) – Signal optimization can improve traffic flow through existing signalized intersections and can increase the capacity of the intersection. Updated signal equipment can also improve capacity through existing intersections and thus reduce delay and improve level of service. Estimated Cost: \$500,000

Create “pocket” park and ride spaces by leasing parking spaces at existing under-utilized parking lots throughout the study area. Since traditional park and ride lots have been difficult to site and fund, a new approach is required. “Pocket” park and ride may include leasing several parking spaces at large, strategically located shopping centers in the region. Estimated Cost: \$70,000

Conduct a CarShare assessment analyses in Colchester, Williston, Essex Junction and Essex to determine the best locations for two CarShare Vermont pods; open new locations accordingly and support operations for one year. Estimated Cost: \$75,000 (\$15,000 for pod assessment analysis and \$60,000 to purchase and operate two cars)

Expand and enhance the TDM Circuit Rider role in the region with a focus on major employers in the Circ project area. CATMA will meet and present employers with information on TDM and provide a TDM Toolkit consisting of a variety of incentives, services and programs that can be implemented at their workplace. Estimated Cost: \$10,000

Create a TDM marketing and outreach effort targeted at the Circ study area to focus on carpooling/ridesharing, transit where available, walking and bicycling, and encouraging employers in the area to consider telecommuting or more flexible work schedules. Estimated Cost: \$20,000

Enhance Local Motion’s bike commuter EAP (Employee Assistance Program) by creating a TDM challenge fund. This fund would be used to match employer funds to provide one-on-one bicycle commuting mentoring for employees to help them translate interest into action. A flat fee charged per employee covers the costs to work with them for however long it takes to get them to their first bike commute. This would directly result in 100+ additional bike commuters getting on the road, and would leverage another 100+ bike commuters whose training would be funded by the employers themselves. Estimated Cost: \$15,000 over two years

- ▶ **Expected Benefits** – Together the components of this project will:
 1. Improve the efficiency of our transportation system by reducing the number of single occupant vehicles (SOV) on our roadways, increasing public transportation ridership, allowing families to downsize vehicle ownership by providing short-term car-share vehicles, and converting SOV commuters to bicycle commuters;
 2. Reduce the impacts of transportation on the environment by decreasing the number of SOVs on the roads, lower auto-derived greenhouse gas emissions by decreasing VMT, and reducing auto-derived pollutants from entering our waterways by encouraging walking, biking, transit, and use of fuel efficient car-share vehicles;
 3. Reduce the need for costly future investments in public infrastructure by creating a mode shift to non-SOV travel. A combined effort to reduce VMTs and SOVs means less wear and tear on our roadways, and reduced traffic congestion decreases demand for additional roadway capacity.
 4. Provide efficient access to jobs, services, and centers of trade by making it easier to combine modes, improve access to public transit, and reduce the reliance of private automobiles to reach employment destinations.

- ▶ **Estimated Project Cost** – \$1,202,000

5) Schedule for CIRC Alternatives Task Force Phase 2

The next phase of work for the *CIRC Alternatives Task Force* will address the prioritization of planning projects to inform the future prioritization of mid-term implementation projects. The planning projects will be prioritized in December; planning projects should commence by mid January 2012. The Task Force anticipates receiving the planning studies' recommendations by the fall of 2012 in order to prioritize the next round of implementation projects for the FY14 Transportation Capital Program.

6) Addenda: Links to Task Force Background Materials

The *CIRC Alternatives Task Force's* website

<http://www.circtaskforce.org/>

Task Force Agendas, Meeting Notes, Handouts, and Presentations

<http://www.circtaskforce.org/public.php?p=0>

Task Force Public Meeting Agendas, Meeting Notes, Handouts, and Presentations

<http://www.circtaskforce.org/public.php?p=1>

Alternatives to the Circ Implementation Projects - Prioritization Scores

<http://www.ccmpto.us/circ/projects/>

Previous Circ Studies and Documents

<http://www.circtaskforce.org/documents.php?d=0>

Circumferential Highway – VTrans

http://www.aot.state.vt.us/eis/CCCH_History.htm

Circumferential Highway – Environmental Impact Study

<http://www.circeis.org/>